

## Mobile Phone Text Reminders and Voice Call Follow-ups Improve Attendance for Community Retail Pharmacy Refills; Learnings from Lango Sub-region in Northern Uganda

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**Abstract :** Introduction: Community retail Pharmacy drug distribution points (CRPDDP) were implemented in the Lango sub-region as part of the Ministry of Health's response to improving access and adherence to antiretroviral treatment (ART). Clients received their ART refills from nearby local pharmacies; as such, the need for continuous engagement through mobile phone appointment reminders and health messages. We share learnings from the implementation of mobile text reminders and voice call follow-ups among ART clients attending the CRPDDP program in northern Uganda. Methods: A retrospective data review of electronic medical records from four pharmacies allocated for CRPDDP in the Lira and Apac districts of the Lango sub-region in Northern Uganda was done from February to August 2022. The process involved collecting phone contacts of eligible clients from the health facility appointment register and uploading them onto a messaging platform customized by Rapid-pro, an open-source software. Client information, including code name, phone number, next appointment date, and the allocated pharmacy for ART refill, was collected and kept confidential. Contacts received appointment reminder messages and other messages on positive living as an ART client. Routine voice call follow-ups were done to ascertain the picking of ART from the refill pharmacy. Findings: In total, 1,354 clients were reached from the four allocated pharmacies found in urban centers. 972 clients received short message service (SMS) appointment reminders, and 382 were followed up through voice calls. The majority (75%) of the clients returned for refills on the appointed date, 20% returned within four days after the appointment date, and the remaining 5% needed follow-up where they reported that they were not in the district by the appointment date due to other engagements. Conclusion: The use of mobile text reminders and voice call follow-ups improves the attendance of community retail pharmacy refills.

**Keywords :** antiretroviral treatment, community retail drug distribution points, mobile text reminders, voice call follow-up

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